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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

High-level Meeting of Ministers and
Decision-Makers on the Development of
Building Materials Industries in Africa

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 26-29 April 1988

# REPORT

## A. Attendance and organization of work

1. The high level meeting on the development of building materials industries in Africa was held at ECA, Addis Ababa from 26 to 29 April 1988.

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the Economic Commission for Africa : Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire and Zambia.

3. The following countries were represented at the meeting by observers : France and the United Kingdom.

4. The following United Nations organs, organizations and bodies were represented at the meeting : United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS/Habitat), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

5. The following in governmental organizations attended as observers : African Regional Organization for Standardization (ARSO), Commonwealth Science Council (CSC) and Shelter-Afrique.

Welcome and opening address (agenda item 1)

6. In his opening address, Professor Adebayo Adedeji, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, welcomed the delegates and stressed the need to reduce the cost of shelter for the low-income segments of the population in African countries through greater field application of the results of research findings. He pledged the support of ECA to assist member States through the implementation of a regional project on the development of building materials industries under UNDP funding, and wished the delegates a very fruitful meeting.

Election of officers (agenda item 2)

7. The following officers were elected to the bureau :

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| Chairman | : | Hon. Albert Yaugari, High Commissioner, Vice Prime Minister's Office, Gabon |
| First Vice-Chairman | : | Hon. Chieftainess Mulenje Nkomesha, Minister of State, Zambia |
| Second Vice-Chairman | : | Hon. Issaga Traore, Minister of Housing, Burkina Faso |
| Rapporteur | : | Mr. Simeon Adeyinka, Director, Public Building and Housing (Construction), Nigeria |

## B. Agenda

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (agenda item 3)

8. The meeting adopted the following agenda as contained in document E/ECA/HMBM/HUS/Inf. 1 :

1. Welcome and opening address
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of agenda and organization of work
4. Proposed programme of action for the development and commercialization of locally produced building materials
5. Draft project document on development of building materials industries in Africa
6. Adoption of a programme of action
7. Adoption of draft project document
8. Adoption of the draft final report of the meeting

9. The meeting adopted the organization of work as contained in document E/ECA/HMBM/HUS/Inf.3.

## C. Account of proceedings

Draft programme of action for the development of building materials industries in Africa (agenda item 4)

10. The representative of ECA introduced document E/ECA/HUS/34 which detailed the development of building materials industries in Africa to the year 2000. The document highlighted the need for the development of local building materials in the African region , in order to meet the housing needs of the vast majority of the African population, and in conformity with the Lagos Plan of Action. Constraints in the development and use of local building materials were then discussed as well as key issues that require to be redressed. Finally, recommendations for action to be adopted by African governments and international organizations for the development of local building materials were proposed.

11. In the discussions that followed, delegates pointed to a number of issues which should be considered in the programme of action : standards and specifications, quality control, need for a specific strategy, need for information on how women would benefit from the programme, and a strategy for commercialization of local building materials, as well as training of enterpreneurs to acquire the technical know-how in the production of building materials. A delegate pointed out that if the lack of standards is a constraint to the use of local building materials, they should not be too rigid, otherwise, they might discourage the small-scale entrepreneurs. Guidelines were proposed as a means of helping enterpreneurs to maintain a reliable quality product. It was also proposed that women should be specifically earmarked for greater participation in the project.

12. Delegates emphasised the need for mobilisation of resources for the commercialization of locally produced materials. The programme of action should include a strategy for mobilization of funds both locally and internationally to support production of local building materials. The need for a strong training component and mechanism for dissemination of information was also emphasized.

13. There was a general comment from some delegations that the programme of action should be completed by a timetable and a management plan.

14. The high level meeting accepted the following amendments to the programme of action on the basis of the recommendations of a sub-committee that was appointed after the discussions at plenary.

- Annex I, Clause 9 : Add. "and dissemination of information" after the word "application"

- Clause 10 : replace "utilizing" by "optimum utilization"

- Add Clause 12 : "promoting and encouraging the effective participation of women in the production of building materials".

- Annex II, Add the following paragraph :

"In conformity with the Resolution of the Fourth Meeting of the Joint Inter-Governmental Committee on Human Settlements and Environment, the Economic Commission for Africa has a key role to play in assisting African Governments in the development and promotion of locally produced materials, particularly with regard to the following:

(i) mobilising funds for the purchase of the necessary plant and equipment for the installation of pilot production units;

(ii) mobilising finance for field and laboratory studies and feasibility studies in connection with the establishment of pilot plants;

(iii) mobilising funds for training, demonstration and popularization in regard to the production and use of local building materials;

(iv) production of documents such as guidelines, manuals and information sheets and to facilitate their distribution;

(v) monitoring the progress of pilot projects".

**Draft project document on development of building materials in Africa (agenda item 5)**

15. The ECA representative introduced the document, and pointed out that the draft document presented to the delegates was a more generalised version of the document which will be presented to UNDP for funding. This is because UNDP submission requires a specific technical format. The ECA representative then reviewed the resolutions by ECA governing bodies dating back to 1969 through the Lagos Plan of Action (1980) and the African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (1986-1990) as well as the Fourth Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment (1987). In the review of activities, the secretariat emphasized the choice of six materials which would be developed by the project, namely : stabilized soil blocks, burnt-clay bricks and tiles, lime and lime-pozzolana, and fibre concrete roofing tiles.

16. Delegates noted in the case of burnt-clay bricks and tiles, that prices were often too high for the existing production units and suggested that the project should assist them in appropriate technological application. The need for dissemination and exchange of information on available technologies between States was also emphasized.

17. Questions were raised regarding the inputs of co-operating agencies, member States' capacity to fund part of their obligation and the need to include timber in the project as well as the need for diversity in the projects proposed in a subregion and the protection of the environment in connection with the production of clay bricks and tiles. It was also suggested that local experts should be given greater responsibilities in the conception, realization and design of projects.

18. The ECA representative proposed that paragraph 25 should be deleted since it was not required under the new UNDP format for the preparation of project documents.

19. A delegate suggested that a project should be included in the prepared programme to utilise the red-mud which is a by-product from the processing of bauxite in Guinea.

20. A question was raised on the mobilization of funds for affordable housing in the project.

21. A representative of UNIDO pledged the cooperation of his organization with ECA in the execution of these projects and recalled the very interesting experiences of Ethiopia with light-weight building materials called FKG, manufactured from pumice. Information is available from UNIDO. He also announced UNIDO plans to hold a workshop in Addis Ababa in 1989 on the FKG technology.

22. A representative of the Commonwealth Science Council (CSC) informed the meeting that his organization was involved with UNCHS (Habitat) in the local building materials field in a certain number of countries in the region and that their activity was complementary to the ECA project and they would give full support to the proposed project.

23. A representative of Shelter-Afrique confirmed his organization's interest in the following areas and expressed the wish that this project would contribute to enhance this kind of assistance :

- assisting entrepreneurs in pre-investment studies;
- offering technical and management assistance to entrepreneurs.

24. In response to the above questions and comments, the ECA representative made the following statement :

- Environmental impact is most important and an environment study should be undertaken before undertaking projects in the field.
- On the lack of diversity in pilot projects, it was said that the selection of materials was based on the resources available in each country.
- On training, he emphasized the need to focus on the project participants who would be involved in the actual manufacturing, production and management of small enterprises.
- Time schedule for the project is actually worked out with the management plan up to 1991 in the project document that will be submitted to UNDP.
- On the dissemination of technologies, ECA has the Pan African Documentation and Information System (PADIS) which can be used efficiently in the project.
- "International Consultants" does not necessarily mean consultants from outside the region, "local consultants" are those who undertake studies at the national level.
- Timber is not included in the project because an important study has already been done by ECA, UNIDO and FAO (FIAG) on this subject.

25. At the end of the discussions, a drafting committee was constituted comprising Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Nigeria, Zaire and Zambia, as well as representatives of International agencies, with the assistance of the secretariat, to incorporate relevant suggestions and amendments in the project document.

Adoption of the draft final report and closure of the meeting (agen a item 8)

26. After examining the draft report paragraph by paragraph, the meeting adopted it with some amendments.

27. During the closing session the ECA Deputy Executive Secretary, Mr. Tchouta Moussa, expressed regrets that the Executive Secretary could not be present because of other urgent commitments. He stated that he was impressed by the dedication with which delegates had dealt with the issues relating to a programme of action and a project document for the development of building materials industries in Africa and pledged ECA's support for the follow-up of the recommendations and decisions of the meeting. Finally he expressed his appreciation to the Chairman, the delegates and interpreters for their respective contributions.

28. The first Vice-Chairman, Hon. Chieftainess Mulenje Nkomesha, thanked the delegates for their co-operation in achieving a successful meeting and urged ECA to expedite action for the implementation of the agreed decisions.

29. The representative of ECA, urged delegates to assist in ensuring their governments' continued support to facilitate early implementation of the full-scale project on the development of building materials industries in Africa. In this connection it was agreed that governments would submit to ECA, within a reasonable period of time, preferably six weeks, their letters of intent to participate in the project.